

TOUR Championship

Friday, September 3, 2021

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

Rory McIlroy

Quick Quotes

Q. What was the difference between today's round and yesterday? It seems like statistically about the same?

RORY MCILROY: I hit a few more fairways, or at least if I did miss fairways, I was just missing them.

I got off to a poor start and then once I got it going there on the back nine and just kept hitting good iron shots pretty close and converting few of them. And then I finished with a flourish. I birdied those last three holes and played those really well.

So, but yeah, once you get the ball in play here, I think it's, the pins, I thought the pins today were pretty tricky because all of them were, even if you hit the ball close, I hit a few wedge shots to like four, five feet and you still had big breaking putts or if you're on the wrong side of the hole, it's still tricky. But to be 2-over through 4 and play the last 14 in 6-under was a really good effort to at least just keep myself in the tournament.

Q. Would this thing be a lot more fun if it was like the Bob Hope Classic or like last week? In other words, if guys were capable of shooting reasonably capable of shooting 63, 64 every day, would it be more fun, do you think it would be harder?

RORY MCILROY: No, I think harder because, I mean, if it is easier it means the leaders just have just as good a chance of shooting 6-, 7-, 8-under par.

Where I feel here it's like you shoot 4-under around here and you're going to move up. I think it's good to have a challenge. I mean, Harry and I were saying at the start of this week, it's finally coming to a golf course you have to think. The last couple weeks you didn't really have to think much about what you were doing and this week you got to play the angles, got to play a little smarter and that makes a difference.

Q. Any work with Brad here this week?

RORY MCILROY: A little bit. He just watches me hit some



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putts and I think because there is so many of these big breaking putts, just been trying to visualize like entry points. And he'll put a penny two-thirds of the way down the putt, a big breaking putt, and I'm having to visualize the ball going in above it, and then if I want to hit it firmer, visualize the ball going in below it. So just sort of really playing around with the speed and then trying to match those speeds up to lines. So just doing a bunch of that. Sort of more playful skill stuff instead of any technical things.

Q. Do you have any thoughts on Player of the Year? It seems like it's pretty packed.

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, it's pretty packed, but I mean, you just got to go by the, I think, the wins and the importance of the wins, I guess is probably the big thing. So saying that, I won it in 2019 when Brooks won two majors, so a little different.

But, yeah, there's maybe three guys that have got a real shot at winning Player of the Year, and I mean, I think I know who I would vote for. It's probably going to come down to this last week to see how it all pans out, but I think I have a pretty good idea of who I would vote for.

Q. (No Microphone.)

RORY MCILROY: Yeah. He was probably going to go on and win the Memorial.

Q. (No Microphone.)

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I mean, like, I thought, I mean, he was going to go and win it, right? Yeah, I mean, and he's so consistent as well. He's had like 14 top-10s and he's just been, basically anytime he's teed it up, he's been there. So, yeah, he said it earlier in the week. He's the best player in the world and he's shown that for basically all year.

Q. (No Microphone.)

RORY MCILROY: I think players, as in us, I think we regard it a little higher than maybe the public do because it is, it has that feel. I think it's got bigger and better every year. I think it gets a tough time, especially on like golf Twitter because people think they try too hard to make it --

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it is what it is. It's the PLAYERS championship. It's not part of the four majors, but it's a very big golf tournament.

Q. The auto-qualifiers for the U.S. team, they had dinner with Captain Stricker --

RORY MCILROY: I called in. I was eating in the same vicinity, so I called in and said hello.

Q. They said they talked a little bit about he wanted their input on who might fit. Have the guys who are sort of definitely in there for the European team, have you guys been in contact with Padraig about similarly who might be a good fit?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I think so. And I think there's quite a bit of continuity on our team, so I think you're going to have pairings that aren't really a surprise to most people. There's going to be a couple of rookies on the team that are going to have to see who they pair well with and that will be up to maybe different personalities, maybe looking into the stats to see whose game matches up with who, but we have got some tried and tested formulas that have worked in the past and I don't think there's any reason to deviate from them too much.

Q. Has Padraig contacted you the way Stricker's talked to his guys for advice on captain's picks? Has he consulted you or any of the other players on who do you think would be a good addition?

RORY MCILROY: I can't speak on behalf of any of the other players, but I haven't talked to him about it, no, I haven't. I've talked about myself and maybe some of the potential players that I might play with in the team formats, but no, nothing about picks.

Q. Based on all the captains you've played under, is he, so far, is Padraig so far more of an involved captain, more of a distanced captain, how does he fit in to this point?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I would say a little more of a distanced captain than the last, at least from -- I feel like Thomas basically took a year and a half out from his career to really focus on the captaincy and...

Q. McGinley for sure.

RORY MCILROY: McGinley for sure. Clarkie a little bit too. I think as well, like Padraig is still pretty competitive, he's got a PGA TOUR card, he plays over here. So I think he more than the last few captains has had to try to balance that I'm going to be a Ryder Cup captain, but I'm still trying to play at a high level and focus on my game a

little bit. But I think over the last couple of months I've definitely felt more of a switch where he's definitely more in Ryder Cup mode than he is playing mode.

Q. Does that work against you, could that work against you, being competitive, because of the demands of a captaincy?

RORY MCILROY: I don't think so. The captain doesn't hit any shots and that's what I always say. I mean, I played under some pretty average captains, I played under some really good captains and we have won both times. Like I'm not trying to play down the role of the captain, but I don't think it's as important as everyone thinks it is. The players are the ones on the golf course hitting the shots and holing the putts.

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